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Spring Is Here:

Time to become mountain lion and bear aware

By Rory Aikens
Arizona Game & Fish Department
Spring is here and it is time for those visiting or living in the wild lands, especially in the high country, to become bear and lion aware, advised Arizona Game and Fish Department officials.

Bears are coming out of their dens and are typically scrambling to fill their winter-empty bellies. Human inhabited areas and campgrounds can become a source of readily available food.

Young lions are often being kicked loose by their mothers, which means they are attempting to establish their own territories and can end up in human inhabited areas. A woman in the Flagstaff area recently had such a young lion encounter near her home in the woods east of town.

Bill Watt, Flagstaff regional information and education program manager, said the young lion was apparently attracted to the woman's small pet dog, so she simply picked the animal up and took it into the house. "Free-roaming pets can become possible prey items for hungry predators such as lions. Even dog food left outside can become an attractant, not just for hungry lions or bears, but for other animals such as skunks and raccoons that they might prey upon. Any such attractant can cause a food-chain effect," Watt said.

Although the recent lion encounter occurred in the Flagstaff area, department biologists pointed out that similar scenarios could occur in various habitats across Arizona. "It's the time of year when people should become more lion and bear aware, which means following some common sense guidelines. First and foremost, do not



intentionally feed wildlife," said department spokesperson Pat O'Brien.

Some areas of the state, especially southern Arizona, have not received much winter and spring precipitation. The lack of moisture has resulted in less groceries out there for wildlife, which can lead to increasing human-wildlife interactions in those areas.

"Wild animals are unpredictable and every encounter can be different. We offer the following tips or general guidelines for people to consider," O'Brien said.

- * Never intentionally feed wildlife, and avoid unintentionally feeding them also;
- * Secure all garbage. If you are living in urban-wildlife interface areas, or camping, this step is essential;
- * Take pet precautions. Bring pets in-

doors at night, or keep them outside in a kennel with a secure top. Don't let your pets be free roaming.

* Walk or jog in groups. Pay attention to your surroundings when hiking, jogging or bicycling.

* Supervise your children and keep them in sight. Make sure they are indoors before dusk and not outside alone before dawn. Let your children know what to do, or not do, if confronted by a large predator such as a lion or bear.

If you encounter a lion or bear, keep these suggestions in mind:

* Stay calm. Stop or slowly back away. Face the animal. Stand upright and speak firmly. Never run - that might prompt a predator-prey attack response from the wild animal.

Grrrrrow!

With the arrival of Spring, bears will be awaking from their winter's sleep, with a kingsize hunger. Knowing what to do with your household trash, picnic or camping food items can save you serious problems, both on-post and in the woods.

Courtesy Photo

* Make yourself look bigger, such as holding your jacket out like wings.

* Don't act threatening and do not corner the animal.

* Wave you arms over your head and loudly vocalize to let the animal know you are human. Sometimes, predator attacks can be attributed to cases of mistaken identity, so let the animal know you are human.

* If the wild animal acts aggressively and shows little fear of you, throw something at it like rocks, sticks, pots or pans - whatever you have at hand. Avoid bending down and lowering your profile while doing this.

* If attacked, fight back. Attacking predators have been driven away by people fighting back.

* Try to keep a safe distance away from wild animals. Even small wild animals can injure you, given the right (or wrong) set of circumstances. Getting close to a wild animal may make you appear as a threat.

* If you see a wild predator not showing fear of humans and acting aggressively, let the Game and Fish Department know. If it is after normal weekday business hours, try calling Operation Game Thief at 1-800-352-0700.

"Keep in mind that our wildlife officers each cover a huge territory encompassing hundreds of square miles and they handle lots of wildlife calls on any single day. That means they can't always go out on every wildlife call the department receives. However, it is important for us to know if there is a large predatory animal that is being aggressive and/or showing no fear of humans," O'Brien explained.

June 13 big game hunt applications deadline

By Rory Aikens
Arizona Game & Fish Department

The deadline this year for big game hunt applications is the second Tuesday in June (the 13th) rather than the third Tuesday, advised Arizona Game and Fish Department officials.

"In reality because of how the calendar falls, this is only two days earlier than last year. We earnestly tried to avoid changing the time frame, but the logistics involved with processing applications dictated otherwise," said Assistant Director Jim Burton.

Burton explained that last year, deer were added to the bonus point system, which increased the time factor

for processing applications. "The way the calendar falls this year, keeping the third Tuesday in June would have impacted our ability to process all the applications in sufficient time."

Information Branch Chief Joe Janisch said the department now places the Hunt Regulations on its Internet home page (www.azgfd.com) just as soon as they are ready. That will be done the sometime during the week following the April 15 Game and Fish Commission meeting when the hunt regulations are adopted. Once people have the latest information available, they can fill out and submit their hunt-permit application. Hunt-permit applications are also available on the department's Home Page.

Apaches basketball team holds tryouts

Cochise College release

The Cochise College men's basketball team will be having team tryouts April 21 for any local high school seniors who will be incoming college freshman.

Cochise coaches will be on hand to evaluate the players. The tryout will consist of individual drills, team drills, and playing games with the current team members.

The tryouts will go from 1 p.m. until 5 p.m. at the Apache Stronghold gym on the Douglas Campus.

There is no cost for the tryout.

For more information, interested players should call the basketball office at 364-0272.

Trail tour challenges bikers, hikers, horseback riders

USDA Forest Service release

SIERRA VISTA, Ariz. — Hikers, mountain bikers and horseback riders are all invited to participate in the second John Cooper and Perimeter Trail Tour on Saturday. The tour is a nine-mile loop between Miller and Carr Canyons that highlights the John Cooper and Perimeter trails, dedicated last May. An abbreviated 3.7-mile hike is also being offered. The John Cooper and Perimeter Trails Tour is offered as one of the many activities during the month-long Nature’s Extravaganza 2000 (NATX 2000) celebration in April. It is sponsored by the Dawn to Dust Mountain Bike Club of America, the Huachuca Hiking Club, the Sierra Vista Riding Club and the Coronado National Forest.

To accommodate bike, hoof and foot travel, departure times will vary. Participants need to arrive 30 minutes before the start time of their tour. All tours will de-

part on time. Mountain bikers will begin touring at 7 a.m. Horseback riders will head out at 8 a.m. Immediately after the horses depart, hikers for the entire nine-mile loop will begin their tour. Hikers walking the short, 3.7-mile Perimeter Trail will depart at 9 a.m. Participants should bring water, sunscreen, food and other supplies they might need during the day. The \$25 registration fee covers a t-shirt with profit to be used for continued John Cooper and Perimeter Trail development. T-shirts will be ordered and delivered after the tour. Registration forms will be available at Sun N’Spokes at 164 Fry Blvd., or at M & M Cycling at 1301 Fry Blvd. Forms may also be obtained at the Sierra Ranger District, Coronado National Forest at 5990 S. Highway 92 in Hereford, and at the Douglas Ranger District office at 3081 North Leslie Canyon Rd., Douglas.

“Of all events we’ve participated in, we’ve received the most positive response about this one. The tour was offered for the first time last year,” said Dan Abrams, owner of Sun N’Spokes bike shop in Sierra Vista. “It was a gorgeous day, everything was perfectly organized, and all tours left on time meaning participants did not have to hang around. People loved that. “The tour also offered an opportunity for horseback riders, hikers and bikers to come together on the same trail on the same day. Usually, these groups don’t interact. People enjoyed meeting others from the different groups,” Abrams said. There are several points of contact for more information about the John Cooper and Perimeter Trails Tour. Call: Dana Thornhill at 458-3757; Sun N’Spokes bike shop at 458-0685; M&M Cycling at 458-1316; the Sierra Vista Ranger District at 378-0311; or the Douglas Ranger District at 364-3468.

State’s fishing report improves with the weather

By Rory Aikens
Arizona Game and Fish Department
Central Waters
Urban Lakes - All Phoenix Urban lakes have been stocked with channel catfish. Anglers are reporting that these “Texas” catfish are very cooperative and bite immediately after stocking. Some are reporting some nice stringers using worms, cut baits (liver, mackerel, or shrimp) and stink baits. You can access the Urban Fishing Bulletin on our web page www.azgfd.com

Lake Pheasant - Lake level is at 94 percent of capacity. Bigger bass have been holding deeper in 20-40 feet in the creek beds but the warming water and lengthening day trend could change that any time. Try water dogs for the big bass. The smaller males are on the beds in shallow water. Sight fishing with soft plastics may be effective. A few whites have been taken in Castle Creek on spinners and crankbaits. A few largemouth and crappie are being caught up in the river on shad. Try night crawlers or shrimp for catfish. Bluegill fishing is improving. Try fishing small jigs or worms near submerged brush. Water visibility in the main lake is very high so locating good spots is not difficult. Don’t forget that a portion of the Agua Fria Arm of the lake is closed for the nesting bald eagles. The upper Aqua Fria may be accessed by Table Mesa Road.

Roosevelt Lake - Lake level is at 30 percent capacity. The Cholla and Badger (Windy Hill) boat ramps are accessible. Crappie fishing picked up over the weekend with anglers fishing minnows under crappie lights at night. One-to-two-inch jigs with chartreuse tails or in red/white pattern are also producing. A monster 2.9-pound crappie was caught last week. Crankbaits, spinnerbaits, plastic worms and jigs off of main lake points in 2-10 feet are producing a lot of smaller bass. A few bass in the 5-6 pound range were also caught over the weekend.

Upper Saltriver - Flows were averaging 230 cfs. Anglers continue to pull in some nice flatheads. Try fishing pools with live or cut bait. Only live baitfish collected from the river upstream of the diversion dam can be legally used. If you catch a flathead catfish with a Game and Fish tag attached to it, please note the weight, length and river location, then call the Mesa Regional Office with the information at (602) 981-9400 (you can keep the fish). Part of the Salt River is in a wilderness area; be sure to know the rules. You are allowed to keep all sport-fish harvested in this stretch of the Salt River, even tagged catfish.

Apache - Lake level is 97 percent. Fishing remains sporadic. Minnows, night crawlers, and crayfish are still producing some bass. Spinnerbaits and crayfish patterned crankbaits are producing smallies as well. Yellow bass are hitting night crawlers and minnows. Some trophy-sized yellow bass pushing 2-pounds are still coming in. Water dogs and night crawlers are producing some nice catfish. A few walleye were caught last weekend but generally walleye fishing remains slow. Fishing at night, dawn, dusk or on overcast days will improve your chances. During the day walleye will retreat to deeper water but are still catchable.

Bartlett - Lake level has risen to 41 percent capacity. Boat launching is accessible off the beach below the ramp. Crappie fishing improved with the warmer temperatures last week. Anglers are having success in the daytime on jigs and doing even better during the night with crappie lights. Try minnows or jigs in chartreuse or red/white patterns in 6-12 feet around islands in the main lake, as well as the Yellow Cliffs area. Slip bobbers can be effective while using crappie light at night. Bass fishing is fair. Crankbaits, spinnerbaits and plastic worms are producing strikes. Try worms, shrimp or mackerel for the channel cats.

Horseshoe - Lake level is at 9 percent of capacity. There continue to be some reports of crappie and bass biting below the dam. No reports from the main lake. Boat launching is next to impossible in the lake. Remember that the Colorado pikeminnow and the razorback sucker are endangered and must be released immediately. All sport-fish and carp you catch above the dam may be kept (no limits) and live baitfish, such as minnows, may not be transported to this lake.

Verde River (above Horseshoe) - No reports.

Lower Saltriver (below Saguaro Lake) - Salt River below Stewart Mountain Dam is 8 cfs. Rainbow trout were stocked last week at Phon D. Sutton Recreation Site and Granite Reef Recreation Site. Panther Martins in the yellow and red dotted pattern, Power Bait and worms are producing good numbers of 10-14 inch trout. Key in on good trout habitat, such as riffles and the head of pools.

Lake Mead - Largemouth bass fishing is fair to good. Largemouth are spawning and are being caught in the coves. Striped bass fishing has been good with cut anchovies at Gypsum Wash, Las Vegas, the tires at Las Vegas Bay Marina and Fish Island. The lake is at 1210.3 feet elevation.

Willow Beach - Fishing has been fair for trout. Rainbow trout were stocked last week. Projected average daily release from Hoover Dam is 21,300cfs.

Lake Mohave - Large stripers are being caught on AC Plugs between Cottonwood and Willow Beach. Rainbow trout will be stocked near the Chalk Cliffs this week. Largemouth bass fishing is fair to good. The lake is at 642.7 feet in elevation.

Below Davis Dam - Striped bass and rainbow trout fishing has been fair. The

projected average daily flow is 18,000cfs.

Topock Marsh - Fishing for largemouth bass has been fair to good with rubber worms.

Havasu - Fishing has been good. Anglers are still catching a lot of smaller stripers but some are falling in the 20-inch-plus range. Largemouth bass fishing is picking up. Try plastics flipped into shoreline structure in and around the many acres of artificial habitat in the coves.

Northeastern Arizona (White Mountains)
Becker Lake - Trout fishing is fair to good. Anglers should try small to mid-sized nymphs or colorful spinners. Remember that Becker is artificial lure and fly only between Oct. 1 and May 25, and limit is two fish.

Big Lake - Fair to good for trout. Anglers should try yellow salmon eggs or brightly-colored Power Bait, such as yellow or rainbow. Mid-sized flies and wooly worms in black, brown, or green are also working.

Concho - Trout fishing is good. Shore fishermen are having success with worms, corn, and Power Bait. Boat anglers catching fish by trolling Rooster Tails and Panther Martin spinners. Black, brown, or green flies or wooly worms also working from boats.

Crescent - Good for trout. Corn or either yellow or rainbow-colored Power. Black, brown, or green flies or wooly worms are also effective.

Fool Hollow - Fair for all species. Recently stocked with catchable-sized trout. Bass and walleye bite picking up. For bass, try rubber worms fished on the bottom or along rocky structures or lures fished close

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to shoreline. For walleye, use worms or sinking Rapala lures, fished over rocky structure, from dusk until dark.

Greer Lakes - Each lake is full. Trout fishing is fair to good at each reservoir. Bunch and Tunnel Reservoirs were recently stocked with catchable-sized trout. At River Reservoir, try trolling with spinners or small to large flies, including wooly buggers or wooly worms in black, brown, or green colors. Launch ramp is usable at River. At Tunnel Reservoir, try Power Bait or worms.

Hulsey Lake - Trout fishing is fair to good for carryover trout from last year. Try small spinners or Power Bait.

Lee Valley - Fair to good for trout. Grayling are being caught on small, black flies. Trout may be taken with artificial lure and fly only, there is a two fish limit, and a 12-inch minimum length.

Luna Lake - Fair to good for rainbow trout. Anglers having success with black, brown, or green flies, salmon eggs, worms, or Power Bait.

Lyman - Fair to good for bass and catfish in shallow water.

Nelson - Fair to good for trout. Worms or corn working best; cast about 15 to 20 feet out and use pencil bobber placed about four feet above the hook. Fly fishermen

are having success with peacock ladies and medium-sized nymphs. The bag limit for rainbow and brown trout is removed on Nelson Reservoir until May 1.

Rainbow - Fair for trout. Recently stocked with catchable-sized trout.

Show Low - Fair to good for trout and walleye. Recently stocked with catchable-sized trout. To fish for walleye, use worms or sinking Rapala lures fished from shore over rocky structure. Best times are from dusk until dark.

Woodland - Fair for trout.

White Mountain Streams - Try fishing in the afternoon with baits.

Southern Waters

Tucson Urban - The urban lakes were stocked with channel catfish last week. Best baits are chicken liver, shrimp, hot dogs, or prepared catfish stink bait. Anglers are reporting slow fishing, but are still catching their limits. Buy a two pole stamp and try different baits to double your chances.

Those anglers showing patience are taking home lots of nice fish.

Riggs Flat - The gate is scheduled to open Saturday. There are both rainbow and brown trout wintering in the lake. Is scheduled to be stocked with rainbow trout next week.

Cluff Ranch - Slow for warm water species, although some crappie and bass are being caught.

Roper Lake - Slow for bass, catfish and sunfish. Should pickup at any time.

Dankworth Pond - Poor for all species.

Arivaca - Water quality has improved and oxygen levels are returning to near normal levels. In an effort to boost the largemouth bass population, fingerlings have been stocked. Fishing is poor or worse. *Due to elevated mercury readings in the warm water species, (bass, sunfish and catfish) it is recommended that these fish not be eaten until further notice. Catch and release should be practiced.*

Pena Blanca - Fishing is poor for warm water species. *Due to elevated mercury readings in the warm water species (bass, sunfish, crappie and catfish), it is recommended that these fish not be eaten until further notice. Catch-and-release should be practiced.* Since trout are hatchery raised and stocked, they are OK to eat.

Patagonia - Fishing is picking up for warm water species: bass, sunfish and catfish. Crappie fishing fair with anglers catching some nice fish along the cattail lines. Anglers are being asked to complete the visitor's questionnaire concerning their fishing trip upon leaving the park. This

questionnaire will provide important information for future lake management. For lake information call (520) 287-6063.

Parker Canyon - Trout fishing is very good. Was stocked with rainbow trout last week. Try small spinners, Super Dupers, Z-Rays or Power Bait, corn or cheese in 10 -15 feet of water. Fishing is poor for warm water species (bass, catfish and sunfish). With the warming weather, they should turn on in the next couple of weeks. Northern pike surveys continue to produce large fish. Several pike over 10 pounds have been sampled in the past weeks. The largest pike was just a few ounces short of 14 pounds. Anglers are encouraged to try to catch this illegally introduced species. Anglers should try spoons and crankbaits fished over the tops of submerged vegetation. The water level has come up about nine feet. Launching is no longer a problem. For lake information call (520) 455-5847.

Picacho Reservoir - Due to extremely low water conditions Picacho Reservoir has experienced a fish kill.

Rose Canyon Lake - The Forest Service plans to open the campground on April 14. It was stocked with rainbow trout last week. Should be good fishing this weekend. For lake information call (520) 749-8700.

Commissary shoppers save 27 percent

DeCA release

FORT LEE, Va. - The slogan for The Defense Commissary Agency is "Bring Home the Savings!" Now there's proof as a new study shows military shoppers indeed bring home the savings when they use their commissary benefit.

The 1999 Market Basket Price Comparison Study found 27 percent average savings for shoppers in the contiguous United States. An independent contractor provided the study data.

"Commissary savings show we continue to do a great job delivering this important part of military pay and benefits," said DeCA Chief Executive Officer, John F. McGowan. "Even as competition within the supermarket industry drives down private sector prices, DeCA continues to provide a great value to our patrons as we obtain excellent prices from our suppliers."

The Market Basket Study determines the difference between military and private sector supermarket prices. The study compared the prices of items from a representative sample of 28 commissaries in the contiguous United States to the prices of items in traditional supermarkets within the market-ing areas of those commissaries.

Approximately 500 items, representing a broad range of most frequently purchased

items across all categories, were surveyed. These included canned goods, meat and produce, bakery and dairy items, baby care products, health and beauty items, and paper goods. Price comparisons took into account both commercial sales tax where levied and the 5 percent commissary surcharge. Data from overseas stores was not included in this comparison, since comparable data from overseas civilian grocers is not readily available and varies greatly from country to country.

At 27 percent, DeCA exceeds its performance promise to the Department of Defense to provide 25 percent savings for military grocery shoppers. With 27 percent savings, a family of four routinely shopping their commissary will save \$2,030 per year, based on official U.S. statistics for home consumption of food bought in stores.

Commissary shoppers can save even more by using manufacturer coupons. In fiscal 1998, commissary shoppers redeemed about \$104 million in coupons.

"Commissary savings are real money that military shoppers use to improve their quality of life, whether they buy school clothes for the kids, help pay the bills or go on a well-deserved vacation," McGowan said. "We're proud to be a cornerstone of your military community."

Pvt. Murphy's Law By Mark Baker



Playful Black-footed Ferrets delight workshop participants

By Rory Aikens
Arizona Game & Fish Department

Arizona’s first black-footed ferret natural history workshop was so successful that teachers and other participants are asking to come back again next year.

“The workshop was so successful that participants are already asking to attend other Arizona Game and Fish Department Heritage-funded workshops on other wild-life species,” said Frosty Taylor, the department’s Heritage information coordinator.

As participants gathered in Seligman in late March, they anxiously awaited seeing the rare species pop their heads out of burrows. Spotlighting for the nocturnal endangered species in the moonlight in the Gunnison’s prairie dog fields was the highlight of the two-day workshop where participants learned about the native mammals, and helped with field work at the reintroduction site.

The educational adventure started on a Friday evening as the participants gathered for a brief orientation session.

Saturday morning they attended a class, where they learned the historical and biological story of one of North America’s most endangered species. Black-footed ferrets disappeared from Arizona’s wilderness over 60 years ago because of disease and governmental poisoning programs that wiped out prairie dog colonies - the wild ferret’s primary food supply.

Listed as endangered in 1956, biologists thought they were extinct in the mid-1970s. In 1981, the discovery of a small group of black-footed ferrets in Meeteetse, Wyoming, offered a ray of hope for the species. However, in 1985 outbreaks of canine distemper and sylvatic plague killed most of the Meeteetse ferret population.



Courtesy Photo Nat. Black-footed Ferret Conservation Center

Black-footed ferrets were thought to be extinct when in 1981, a small group were found in Meeteetse, Wy.



Courtesy Photo Nat. Black-footed Ferret Conservation Center

Black-footed ferrets, one of the rarest mammals of North America, were reintroduced in March 1996, when 65 ferrets were placed in acclimation pens in Aubrey Valley, marking the first time on-site preconditioning was used in the national ferret recovery program.

To save the species, the last 18 ferrets were trapped and moved to a breeding facility in Sybille, Wyoming, which became the National Black-footed Ferret Conservation Center. Those ferrets started the long road back to recovery.

The dramatic recent history of the black-footed ferret was all part of the workshop. Saturday afternoon the attendees rolled up their sleeves and helped dig holes for nest boxes that will be used this spring as kits are born. Nest boxes are placed below ground level in the breeding pens to protect the kits from the summer heat. Some 63 kits were born at the Arizona reintroduction site last June.

Excitement filled the air as a few of the more curious black-footed ferrets popped their masked faces out of their burrows to see what was going on as the digging took place.

But Saturday night was the event everyone was waiting for - the opportunity to see the emerald green eyes of the furry little creatures as they pop their heads out of the burrows.

They are rarely seen during daylight hours, but they scatter and play beneath the crisp bright stars. However, the slightest noise or movement sends them scampering back into their burrows. So, it’s a rare treat indeed to see the emerald eyes glow.

Black-footed ferrets, one of the rarest mammals of North America, were reintroduced in March 1996, when 65 ferrets were placed in acclimation pens in Aubrey Valley, marking the first time on-site preconditioning was used in the national ferret recovery program. The Seligman site was chosen because of its habitat and plentiful food source - the Gunnison’s prairie dog.

Young conservationist earns highest award

By Rory Aikens
Arizona Game & Fish Department

Lucas Reineke, the Arizona Game and Fish Department’s 1998 “Youth Conservationist of the Year” will received the Silver Hornaday Boy Scout Award at 7 p.m., April 28 at St. Jerome’s Catholic Church, 10815 N. 35th Ave.

The William T. Hornaday Award is granted to Scouts who have done exceptional and distinguished service in conservation. The silver medal is the highest conservation award available to a Scout.

Lake Pleasant eagle closure remains in effect until June 15

By Rory Aikens
Arizona Game & Fish Department

The annual nesting bald eagle closure for a portion of the Agua Fria Arm of Lake Pleasant will remain in effect until June 15 due to eaglets in a nest, advised Arizona Game and Fish Department officials.

Bald Eagle Nestwatch Coordinator James Driscoll’s announcement follows confusion resulting from a recent lift for the closure on a bald eagle nesting site along the Verde River south of Camp Verde. The department has received calls from the public questioning whether the Lake Pleasant closure had been lifted as well.

Closures are set in December to reduce human disturbance during the nesting season. “Overall the boating and fishing public has been very supportive and cooperative with this annual nesting season closure. The challenge every year is getting the word out, especially to new boaters and anglers, or those who have not been on Lake Pleasant before,” said Driscoll.

Driscoll said Pleasant has been productive every year except one (1996) since the lake filled to the new level in 1993. The two current nestlings increase the total to 11 nestlings produced from the Breeding Area. No nestlings were produced from the breeding area before the lake level went up.

The Forest Service recently lifted the Verde River closure due to lack of nesting activity at that Verde River closure.

Biologists from the Forest Service and the Arizona Game and Fish Department have monitored the Verde River site since early January to see if eagles were active at that site. Eagles have been seen near the site, but egg laying and incubation, which normally occurs in January to mid-March, has not been observed.

Eagles will return to the same nesting site every year but may not nest. However, the birds may remain in the area until summer before heading north to cooler climates.